

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## ASPHODEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "VIXEN," "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," ETC.

### CHAPTER XXII. "FOR I WOL GLADLY YELDEN HIRE MY PLACE."

EDGAR TURCHILL rode over to South Hill directly after breakfast next morning. It was a hunting day, and the meet was at a favourite spot; but he had business to do which could brook no delay, and even the delight of skimming across the Vale of the Red Horse, on a hunter well able to carry him, must give way to the more vital matter which called him to the house on the hill. So soon as Sir Vernon Lawford might be fairly supposed to be accessible to a visitor, Mr. Turchill presented himself, and asked for an interview.

He was ushered straight to Sir Vernon's study, that sacred, and in a manner official chamber, which he had ever held in awe; a room in which the driest possible books, in the richest possible bindings, repelled the enquiring mind of an ordinary student, who looking for Waverley, found himself confronted with Blackstone, or exploring for Byron, found himself face to face with Chitty or Campbell.

Here, Sir Vernon, seated reposefully in his great red morocco arm-chair, listened courteously to Edgar's relation of his love, and his hope that, with parental approval, his constancy might speedily be rewarded.

"I have heard something of this before," said Sir Vernon. "My sister told me you had proposed to Daphne, and had been rejected. I was sorry the child had not better taste; for I like you very much, Turchill, as I believe you know."

"You have been very good to me,"

answered Edgar, reddening with the honest warmth of his feelings. "South Hill has been my second home. The happiest hours of my life have been spent here. Yes, Sir Vernon, Daphne did refuse me in the summer; but I felt that it was my own fault. I spoke too soon. I ought to have bided my time. And last night, after the ball, I spoke again, and——"

"With a happier result," said Sir Vernon. "But Daphne is little more than a child—no wiser than a child in her whims and fancies. I should not like a straightforward fellow like you to suffer from a school-girl's frivolity. Do you think she knows her own mind now any better than she did in the summer, when she gave you quite a different answer? Are you sure that she is in earnest, that she is as fond of you as you are of her?"

"I have no hope of that," answered Edgar, a little despondently. "I have been loving her ever since she came home, and my love has grown stronger with every day of my life. If she likes me well enough to marry me, I am content."

Sir Vernon remained silent for some moments, gravely contemplating the fire, as if he were reading somebody's history in it, and that a gloomy one.

"I am fond enough of you to be sorry you should marry on such conditions," he answered, after a longish pause. "My younger daughter is a very pretty girl—people persecuted me with compliments about her the other night—and, I suppose, a very fascinating girl; but if she does not honestly and sincerely return your love, I say, Do not marry her. Pluck her out of your heart, Edgar, as you would a poisonous weed. Be sure, if you don't, the poison will rankle there by-and-by, and develop

its venom at the time you are least prepared for it."

Edgar, secure in his assurance of future happiness—for what man having won Daphne could fail to be happy?—smiled at the unwonted energy of Sir Vernon's address.

"My dear sir, you take this matter too seriously," he replied. "I have no fear of the issue. Daphne's heart is free, and it will be very hard if I cannot make myself owner of it, loving her as I do, and having her promise to marry me. I only want to be assured of your approval."

"That you have with all heartiness, my dear boy. But I should like to be sure that Daphne is worthy of you."

"Worthy of me!" echoed Edgar, with a tender smile; "I wish to Heaven I were worthy of her."

"She is very young," said Sir Vernon thoughtfully.

"Nineteen on her next birthday."

"But that birthday is nearly a year off. I hope you will not be in a hurry to be married."

"I shall defer that to your judgment: though I think, as I can never feel warmly interested in Hawksyard till I have a wife there, the sooner we are married, so far as my happiness is concerned, the better."

"Of course. You young men have always some all-sufficient reason for being over the border with the lady. How will your mother relish the change?"

Poor Edgar winced at the question, feeling very sure that Mrs. Turchill would take the event as her death-blow.

"My mother is perfectly independent," he faltered. "She has her jointure."

"Has she not Hawksyard for her life?"

"No; the estate was strictly entailed. I am sole master there."

"I am glad of that," said Sir Vernon.

"It is an interesting old place."

"Daphne likes it," murmured Edgar fatuously.

"I suppose you know that I can give my younger daughter no fortune?"

"If you could give her a million, it would not make me one whit better pleased at winning her."

"I believe you, Edgar," answered Sir Vernon. "When a man of your mould is in love, filthy lucre has very little weight with him. There will be a residue, I have no doubt, when I am gone—a few thousands; but the bulk of my property was settled when I married Lina's mother. I suppose you know that Lina is very

pleased at the idea of having you for a brother-in-law?"

"I know nothing, except that Daphne has consented to be my wife."

"Lina announced the fact to me this morning at breakfast. Daphne was not down—a headache—a little natural shyness, I daresay. Lina is very glad—very much your friend."

"She has always been that," faltered Edgar, looking back with half-incredulous wonder to the time when a word from Lina had been enough to stir the pulses of his heart, when the mention of her name was music.

"I think I cannot do better for you than leave your happiness in Lina's care," said Sir Vernon. "Daphne will not be married first, of course."

"Might they not be married on the same day?" suggested Edgar. "Lina is to be married directly she comes of age, is she not?"

"That has been proposed," said Sir Vernon reluctantly, "but I am in no hurry to lose my daughter, and I don't think Lina is eager to leave me. In my precarious state of health it will be hard for me to bear the pain of parting."

"But, my dear Sir Vernon, she will be so near you—quite close at hand," remonstrated Edgar, inwardly revolting against the selfishness which would delay his own happiness as well as Goring's.

"Don't talk about it, Turchill," exclaimed Sir Vernon testily. "You don't understand—you can't enter into my feelings. My daughter is all the world to me now. What will she be when she is a wife, a mother, with a hundred different interests and anxieties plucking at her heart-strings. Why, I daresay a teething baby would be more to her than her father, if I were on my death-bed."

"Indeed, Sir Vernon, you wrong her."

"I daresay I do. But I am devoured with jealousy when I think of her belonging to any one else. It is the penalty she pays for having been perfect as a daughter. Our virtues, as well as our vices, are often scourges for our own backs. However, when the time comes I must bear the blow—with a smiling countenance, that she may never know how hard I am hit. Only you can imagine I don't want to hasten the evil hour. And now, as I think we understand each other, you may be off to pleasanter society than mine."

Edgar instantly availed himself of this permission, and hastened to the morning-room, where Madoline was seated at her

work-table, while Daphne twisted herself round and round on the music-stool, now talking to her sister, now playing a few bars of one of Schumann's *Kinderstücken*, anon a popular melody she had heard the faithful Bink whistle as he weeded his flower-beds.

She started a little at Edgar's entrance, and "blushed celestial red, love's proper hue," much to the delight of her lover, who hung out a rosy flag on his own side, and looked as shy as any school-girl.

He shook hands with Madoline, and then went straight to the piano, and tried by a tender pressure of Daphne's hand to express something of the rapture that was flooding his soul.

"I have seen your father, dearest," he said in her ear, as she went on picking out little bits of Schumann. "He thoroughly approves—he is glad."

"Then I am glad if he is glad, and you are glad, and Madoline is glad," answered Daphne, with a smile in which there was a subtle mockery that escaped Edgar's perception. "What can I do better than please everybody?"

"You have made me the happiest man in creation."

"Does not every young man say that when he is engaged?" asked Daphne laughingly. "I believe it is a formula. And when he has been married a year the happiest man in creation takes to quarrelling with his wife. However, I hope we may not quarrel. I will try to be as good to you as you have been to me; and that is saying a great deal."

They lingered by the piano, Edgar pouring forth vague expressions of his delight, his gratitude, his intoxication of bliss. Daphne playing a little, and listening a little, with her eyes always on the keys, offering her lover only the lashes, dark brown with sparks of gold upon their tips, for his contemplation. But such lashes, and such eye-lids, and such a lovely droop of the small classic head, were enough to satisfy a lover's eye for longer than Edgar was required to look at them.

By-and-by, when he had exhausted a lover's capacity for talking nonsense, he made a sudden dash at the practical.

"I want you to come and see my mother, Daphne."

"Have you told her?"

"No; not yet. There has been no opportunity, you know."

This was hardly true, since, seated opposite Mrs. Turchill at the breakfast-

table that morning, Edgar had vainly endeavoured to frame the sentence which should announce his bliss, and had found an awkwardness in the revelation which required to be surmounted at more leisure.

"I am going to tell her directly I go home. It was better to see Sir Vernon first, don't you know. And I want you and Madoline to come over to tea this afternoon. You could drive over to Hawksyard with Daphne this afternoon, couldn't you, Madoline?" he asked, going over to the work-table. "It would be so good of you, and would please my mother so very much."

"Would it?" asked Lina, smiling up at him. "Then it shall be done."

The young man lingered as long as he could, consistently with his performance of that duty which he felt must not be deferred beyond luncheon-time. It was hardly a good time to choose for the revelation, for Mrs. Turchill was apt to be somewhat disturbed in her temper at the mid-day meal, her patience having been exercised by sundry defalcations discovered in her morning round of the house. It might be that new milk had been given away to unauthorised recipients, or to pensioners who were only entitled to receive skimmed milk; it might be an unexplainable evanishment of home-brewed beer; or that the principal oak staircase was not as slippery as it ought to be; or that the famous pewter dinner-service was tarnished; or a favourite fender displayed spots of rust; but there was generally something, some feather-weight of domestic care which disturbed the even balance of Mrs. Turchill's mind at this hour. Like those modern scales which can be turned by an infinitesimal portion of a human hair, so the fine balance of Mrs. Turchill's temper required but very little to alter it.

Edgar rode home to Hawksyard in the clear bright winter noontide, feeling as much like a convicted criminal as a young man of pure mind and clear conscience well could feel. He went bustling into the dining-room, rubbing his hands, and making a great pretence of cheeriness. His mother was standing on the hearth-rug knitting a useful brown winter sock—for him, he knew. Those active knitting-needles of hers were always at work for him. He felt himself an ingrate, as he thought of her labour.

"Well, mother; lovely weather, isn't it, so wintry and seasonable. I hope you have had a pleasant morning."



"About as pleasant as I can have in a nest of vipers," answered Mrs. Turchill, frowning at her work, and intent upon turning a heel.

"What's up now?" asked Edgar, nothing startled by the vigour of her speech.

"The beer consumed at Christmas—I won't say drunk, for gallons of it must have been given away—is something too dreadful to contemplate," replied Mrs. Turchill.

"Never mind the beer, mother," answered Edgar, still rubbing his hands before the fire, and dancing from one foot to another in a manner that indicated a certain perturbation of spirit; "Christmas only comes once a year, you know, and the servants ought to enjoy themselves."

"That's all very well, Edgar, within proper limits; but when I see them stepping over the boundary line——"

"You feel that it's time to put on the drag," interjected Edgar. "Of course; very right and proper. Whatever should I do without such a dear prudent mother to look after things?"

And then, suddenly remembering that the most eager desire of his heart at this very moment was to substitute a foolish young wife for this wise and experienced housekeeper, Edgar Turchill became suddenly as vermilion as the most vivid cock's-comb in his mother's poultry-yard. He felt that the revelation he had to make must be blurted out somehow. There was no use in prancing before the fire, making such a serious business of warming his hands.

"I've been over to South Hill this morning, mother," he said at last, rather jerkily.

"Have you?" said Mrs. Turchill curtly. "It seems to me you never go anywhere else."

"Well, I'm afraid that's a true bill," he answered, laughing with affected heartiness, very much as the timorous traveller whistles in a lonely wood. "I love the place, and the people who live in it. South Hill has been my second home ever since I was a little bit of a chap at Rugby. But this morning I have been there on very particular business. I have been having a serious talk with Sir Vernon. I wonder if you could guess the subject of our conversation, mother, and spare my blushes in telling it."

It was Mrs. Turchill's turn to assume the cock's-comb's flaming hue.

"If you have done anything to blush for,

Edgar, I am sorry for you," she observed sternly. "Your father was one of the most respectable men in Warwickshire, and the most looked-up to, or my father would not have allowed me to marry him."

"You are taking me a trifle too literally, mother," answered Edgar, laughing uneasily. "I hope there is nothing disreputable in a man of my age falling in love and wanting to be married. That's the only crime I have to confess this morning. Yesterday afternoon I asked Daphne to be my wife, and she consented; and this morning I settled it all with Sir Vernon. We are to be married on the same day as Goring and Madoline—at least, Sir Vernon said something to that effect."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Turchill freezingly. "Indeed! And now Miss Daphne has consented, and Sir Vernon has consented, and the very wedding-day is fixed, you do me the honour to inform me. I thank you from my heart, Edgar, for the respect and affection, the consideration and regard, you have shown for me in this matter. I am not likely to forget your conduct."

"Dearest mother," gasped Edgar affrightedly, for the icy indignation of his parent's speech and manner went beyond the worst he had feared. "Surely you are not offended—surely——"

"But it is only what I might reasonably have expected," pursued Mrs. Turchill, ignoring the interruption. "It is only what I ought to have looked for. When a mother devotes herself day and night to her son; when she studies his welfare and his comfort in everything; when she sits up with him night after night through the measles—quite unnecessarily as the doctor said at the time—and reduces herself to a shadow when he has the scarlatina; when she worries herself about him every time he gets damp feet, and endures agony all the time he is out shooting; this is pretty sure to be the result. He is caught by the first pretty face he sees, and his mother becomes a cipher in his estimation."

"Believe me that is not my case, dear mother," protested Edgar, putting his arm round the matron's waist, which she made as inflexible as she possibly could for the occasion, and trying to kiss her, which she would not allow. "You will never cease to be valued and dear. Do you suppose there is no room in my heart for you and Daphne? I know she is a mere child, a positive baby, to place at the head of a house which you have managed so cleverly

all these years; but everything in this life must have a beginning, don't you know, and I rely upon you for teaching Daphne how to manage her house."

"That kind of thing cannot be taught, Edgar," answered his mother severely. "It must be the gradual growth of years in an adaptable mind. I don't believe Daphne Lawford will ever be a housekeeper. It is not in her. You might as well expect a butterfly to sit upon its eggs with the patience of a farm-yard hen. However," sighed Mrs. Turchill, "you have chosen for yourself."

"Did you suppose I should let anyone else choose for me in such a matter, mother?"

"I am sorry for my lovely stock of house-linen. The tea-cloths will get used anyhow; and the kitchen-cloths will be made away with by wholesale."

"Never mind a few tea-cloths, mother."

"But it is not a few, it is a great many. I daresay that out of the six dozen that are now in the linen-closet you won't have two dozen sound ones a twelvemonth after your marriage."

"I think I could survive even that loss, mother, if you were happy," answered Edgar lightly.

"How could I possibly be happy knowing the waste and destruction of things that I have taken so much trouble to get together. I'm sure I feel positively ill at the idea of the best glass and china under the authority of a girl of eighteen; your great-grandmother's crown Derby dessert set, which I have often been told is priceless."

"Yes, mother, by people who don't want to buy it. If you wanted to sell it, you would hear a very different story. However, I don't see any reason why Daphne should not be able to take care of the dessert-plates——"

"I have always kept chamois-leather under each plate," interrupted Mrs. Turchill, with a pensive shake of her head. "Will she take as much trouble?"

"Or why there should be waste and destruction anywhere. Daphne will not be the first young wife who ever had to take care of a house, and I know by the way she learnt to row how easy it is to teach her anything."

"Easy to teach her to row, or to ride, or to play lawn-tennis, or to do anything frivolous and useless, I have no doubt," retorted his mother; "but I don't believe it is in her to learn careful ways, and the

management of servants. I only hope the waste and destruction will stop at the house-linen. I only hope she won't bring ruin upon you; but when I think how many a young man of good means has been utterly ruined by an extravagant wife——"

"Upon my word, mother," protested Edgar, with a dash of resentment, feeling that this was too much, "you are making a perfect raven of yourself, instead of being cheery and pleasant, as I expected you to be. I'm sorry I have not been able to choose a wife more to your liking as a daughter-in-law; but marriage is one of the few circumstances of life in which selfishness is a duty, and a man must please himself at any hazard of displeasing other people. I don't believe there's a man who was at the Hunt Ball the other night who won't envy me my good luck."

"Very likely; since men are influenced by mere outside prettiness," said Mrs. Turchill. "Though even there Daphne is by no means faultless. Her nose is too short."

"Now, mother, you have been so good to me all my life that it would be a very unnatural thing if you were to begin to be unkind all at once, and in a crisis of my life in which I most need your love," pleaded Edgar with genuine feeling.

He put his arm round his mother's waist which, this time, was less inflexible than before. He turned the matron's face towards his, and, lo! her eyes were full of tears.

"It would be very strange, indeed, if I could deny you anything," she said, strangling a sob. "There never was a child so much indulged as you were. If you had cried for the moon, it would have quite worried me that I wasn't able to get it for you."

"And you would have given me a stable-lantern instead," answered Edgar, smiling. "Yes, best of mothers, you have always been indulgent, and you are going to be indulgent now, and you will take Daphne to your heart of hearts, and be as fond of her as if she were that baby-girl you lost grown up to womanhood."

"Don't, Edgar, don't!" cried Mrs. Turchill, fairly overcome. "Her bassinet is in the little oak-room. I was looking at it yesterday. I have never got over that loss."

"You will think she has come back to you some day, when you have a little granddaughter," said Edgar tenderly.

His mother once reduced to the pathetic mood was perfectly tractable. Edgar petted and soothed her; protested somewhat recklessly that the chief desire of Daphne's life was to gain her affection; announced the intended afternoon visit; and obtained his mother's promise of a gracious reception.

When Miss Lawford and her sister arrived at about half-past four the drawing-room wore a hospitable aspect; a huge log burning in the Elizabethan fire-place, flowers of a homely kind—chrysanthemums and Christmas-roses, crocuses and snow-drops—about the rooms, and an old-fashioned tea-tray on an old-fashioned sofa-table, nothing of Adam or Chippendale or Queen Anne about it, but a good old ponderous piece of rosewood furniture, almost as heavy as a house.

Mrs. Turchill received her guest with gracious smiles and a heartiness which took Daphne by surprise. She had made up her mind that she was going to be snubbed, and a dash of timidity gave a new grace to her beauty. She was very grave, and seemed, to Mrs. Turchill's scrutinising eye, to be fully awakened to the responsibilities of her position. Could she but remain in this better frame of mind she might fairly be trusted with the Derby dessert-service and piled-up treasures of the linen-closet.

Mrs. Turchill made Daphne sit on the sofa by her side while she poured out the tea, and was positively affectionate in her manner.

"You will be making tea in this pot before long," she said, with a loving glance at the fluted tea-pot. "It is not a good pourer. You'll have to learn the knack of holding it exactly in the right position."

"I hope you are not sorry," faltered Daphne in a very low voice, meaning about the event generally, not with any special reference to the tea pot.

"Well, my dear, I am too truthful a woman to deny that it was a blow," returned Mrs. Turchill candidly. Edgar had kept out of the way when the sisters arrived, wishing his mother to have Daphne all to herself for a little while. "I suppose that kind of thing must always be a blow to a mother. 'My son's my son till he gets him a wife,' you know."

"I hope Edgar will never be any less your son than he is at this moment," said Daphne. "I should not like him so well as I do if I thought his regard for me could make him one shade less devoted to you."

"Well, my dear, time will show," replied Mrs. Turchill doubtfully. "As a rule

young wives are very selfish; they expect to monopolise their husband's affection. All I hope is that you love Edgar as he deserves to be loved. There never was a worthier young man, and no girl living could hope for a better husband than he will make."

To this exhortation Daphne replied nothing. She sat with downcast eyes, stirring her tea, and Mrs. Turchill, taking this silence for maidenly reserve, transferred her attentions to Madoline.

"I am so sorry Mr. Goring did not drive over with you," she said. "I quite expected him."

"You are very kind," answered Lina. "He has gone to London. I had a telegram from Euston Station an hour ago. Gerald has some business to settle with his London lawyers, and is likely to be away for some days."

"I'm afraid you must find South Hill very dull in his absence," suggested Mrs. Turchill politely.

"I miss him very much; but I don't think I am ever dull. My father occupies a good deal of my time; and then there is Daphne, who has generally plenty to say for herself."

"Meaning that I am an insatiable chatterer," said Daphne, laughing. "I'm afraid it was Dibb—I mean Martha, an old school-fellow of mine, who got me into the habit of talking so much."

"Was she a great talker?"

"Quite the contrary. She rarely opened her mouth except to put something into it, so I acquired the pernicious habit of talking for two."

Edgar now came in, and seeing Daphne and his mother seated side-by-side upon the sofa, felt himself exalted to the seventh heaven of tranquil joy. This and this only was needed to fill his cup of bliss: that his mother should be content, that life should flow on smoothly in the old grooves.

"Well, Daphne, how do you like the look of Hawksyard in the winter?"

"I think it is quite the nicest old place in the world. I haven't seen much of the world; but I can't imagine a more interesting old house."

"You will like it better and better as you become more acquainted with it," said Mrs. Turchill. "It is one of the most convenient houses I ever saw, and I have seen a good many in my time. My husband's mother was a capital housekeeper, and she did not rest till she had made the domestic arrangements as near perfection

as was possible in her time. I have tried to follow in her footsteps."

"And to make perfection still more perfect," said Edgar.

"There are modern inventions and improvements, Edgar, which your grandmother knew nothing about. Not that I hold with them all. If you are not tied for time," added Mrs. Turchill, addressing herself to the two young ladies, "I should very much like to show Daphne the domestic offices. It would give her an idea of what she will have to deal with by-and-by."

Daphne, who knew about as much as a butterfly knows of the management of a house, smiled faintly, but said nothing. She had come to Hawksyard determined to make herself pleasing to Mrs. Turchill, if it were possible, for Edgar's sake.

"I ventured to tell them to take out the horses," said Edgar, "knowing that you don't dine till eight."

"I shall be pleased to stay as long as Mrs. Turchill likes," answered Madoline; whereupon the matron, acknowledging this speech with a gracious bend, rose from her sofa, took her key-basket from the table, and led the way to the corridor in which opened those china and linen stores which were the supreme delight of her soul.

Swelling with pride and the consciousness of duty done, she displayed and descanted on her treasures and the convenient arrangement thereof: the old diamond-cut glass; the Bow, the Staffordshire, the Swansea, the Derby cups and saucers, and plates and dishes; crockery bought in the common way of life, and now of inestimable value. She showed her goodly piles of linen and damask, which a Flemish house-wife might have envied. She led her guests to the dairy, which in its smaller and humbler way was as neat and dainty and ornamental as Her Majesty's dairy at Frogmore. She talked learnedly of butter-making, cream-cheeses, and the disposal of skim-milk. Daphne wondered to find how large a science was this domestic management of which she knew absolutely nothing.

"A house of this kind requires a great deal of care and a great deal of thought," said Mrs. Turchill with a solemn air. "Old servants are a great comfort, but they have their drawbacks, and require to be kept in check. With a young, inexperienced mistress I'm afraid they will be tempted to take many liberties."

Mrs. Turchill concluded her speech with

a gentle sigh and a regretful glance at Daphne; not an unfriendly look, by any means, but it expressed her foreboding of future ruin for the house of Hawksyard.

## HOSPITAL OUT-PATIENTS.

### THEIR WAITING-TIME.

ENTRANCE for Out-Patients. Days, So-and-So. Hours, Such-and-Such. Men, At This; Women, At That.

This much: with a painted hand pointing emphatically in a downward and decided direction. And as comparison of regulations with time-pieces proved the time to be a time, and to be an opportunity (women's time, and women's opportunity), the grey stone stairs were descended, the grey stone area women out-patients had to cross was crossed, an area-door, that seemed likely, was opened, and there the waiting women, in their waiting-place, were seen.

The women were many, the order excellent. Indeed, all was so seemly and so tranquil, there was a sensation that a small domestic conventicle had been suddenly come upon; that acquaintance had been made with one of those home-meetings of the proscribed, where a few gathered together in the house of one, and the moving of the spirit was listened for eagerly. The reason was because benches ran from side to side of the small room, at regular intervals; because the benches had backs and foot-rails, comfortably and considerately (seeing that the patients were patients, and would be sure to be weak and weary); because the benches were all planted to look one way (except that inevitable single side-row; because there was a text or two hung on the walls; because such women as were newly entering slid themselves between the benches, and along the benches, to the end, precisely as they would to seat themselves for worship, and precisely with the same hush and strict propriety. Pervading the place, too, was a certain darkness of the sort that seems to fit in (at any rate, conventionally) with Puritanism, or other non-conformity. And this was because this waiting-place was below the level of the street, with its light a half-light; that, being in a position that would be ordinarily the position of a London kitchen, it looked out on to paved yards, on to lime-washed walls, on to plain plank doors, on to grim appliances and utensils, whilst such looking out was spare and limited, implying a somewhat difficult



looking up, if a wish existed to get the treat of undiluted sunshine, and a peep of open sky. Furthermore, the small apartment had a stone vaulted roof; was supported by slim pillars—which accounts for the association of ideas, fully; requiring only the additional fact that the general colour to be seen was drab; that there was nothing in the apartment to spare (barring the texts); nothing to move, nothing to disarrange; that all that was there was orthodox, prescribed, administered, was guarded against all chance of straying and innovation by a shape and ruling altogether conservative.

Good. And this much sketched in, attention must be given to the women. They were distinguished by silence, it has been said; by placidity and composure. So apparent was this, that though the apartment, in which there could have been seated some fifty altogether, were there pressure, was about three parts full, there was no more whisper, and no more murmur, than if three parts again of these had been turned out, and the women reduced to three or four. Out of them, a few sat quietly knitting, which changed the conventicle aspect of the place, when there had been time for it to be perceived; out of them, one was attentive to her book, which might, by the way, have brought the conventicle aspect back; many of them were merely ruminating and contemplative; it was only a couple, or two or three couples, who were exchanging home-chat, or world-chat, making the low hushed whisper that was the sole sound that prevailed. Yet, in spite of the propriety and the impressiveness of this, as the women sat, looked at from behind them, in their straight and patient rows, a whimsical thought shot into the mind. What was there of suffering, it was, in front of each one of those backs? What was there on the other side of each of those woollen garments, of malady, of injury, of "tendency," or complaint? Here are the hind-seamings of a neat, tight, cloth jacket; does it cover a disordered liver? Here is a looser shawl; is it over a fatty heart? Then those bonnets presenting a back-view—all "crown" and "curtain"—entirely without suggestion or indication of the wearers visible from the front. Under this, is it neuralgia? under that, deafness? under those others, contusion, enlargement, "nerves"? Of course, could the poor women's faces, at this first introduction to them, have been seen, this somewhat too pathological

and seemingly unsympathetic wonderment never would have come. Pallor would have been observable in one; over-redness in another; emaciation in a third; in others, the distortion, or the disfigurement, or the distress, that would have been some index of the owner's unenviable eligibility for admission, giving occupation for pity, and setting conjecture at rest. But here there were straight rows of faceless patients; there were straight rows of blank backs—stooping, some of them, or upright, or leaning for support. There were emotionless bonnet-heads; non-elucidating trimmings across the napes of necks; and there was evoked, just for the moment, a kind of aggravation of enigma, a sense of obstinate withholding of any knowledge or information, that provoked queer speculation, and—the record of the speculation stands.

Little harm, however, in the guessing, unavailing as it was. In a short time the solemnity of things changed. The women, growing used to the shy presence of each other, forgot restraint, and getting even less like invalids, became like women assembled together to rest pleasantly, and to indulge in chat at intervals, to make the pleasure more. They did not do this with a kind of escape, all at once. It came on gradually, as relaxation always comes. The low hush of whisper deepened, say; then came half-audible enquiry as to the time, as to the weather, as to some similar topic that could be ventured part aloud. More women entered also, who had to ask leave to pass; other women chafed at the suspense of the waiting, and had to disturb others to get away. A little girl, sitting by her mother, and complaining that her hands were cold, and she could not "tat," or "foot," or drop one, stop one, slip one, whip one—or whatever was the technical mystery she was doing her best to master—gave at last the general touch that appealed to every nature, and proved how all were kin. Being invited to draw near the fire, she drew near; and then afterwards, going away again, she was spirited up to stray outside the door.

"Mother!" she ran back quickly and said, "the other room is nearly full."

Commotion came from it all round. Some women sighed; some tapped out their impatience with their boot-toes upon the boarded floor; some simply folded themselves over afresh, to settle to a long wait again. One was nerved up to going to a house-porter she caught sight of passing,



and to asking querulously whether it was her turn.

"I'll call you when it is," was the somewhat rough reply. "May as well wait till you hear."

Truly, and she did; for was there an alternative, except to go?

There was a woman of another character, though, bent on looking on the inevitable waiting from a much more cheery side. "Oh, well," she cried, "I told my husband I shouldn't be in till seven; and as he won't be wondering where I am, I have no need to care."

Seven! which seven was yet three hours and a half away. But such power has hopefulness, on the utterer if not the listener. The cheery outlook was not over yet, nor nearly.

"You see," the woman cried, for the general enlivening and appeasement, "we are bound to stop our turns; for, counting the country patients, which they always take first, because they have to catch trains, and so can't get home as soon as we can who live near; and counting the new patients, which they always take next, it must be a long time before we are come to, and can't be helped. And, dear me, if they don't see me soon"—and she was standing by now, with face turned, and it could be seen to be lighted by a happy smile—"I'll just send upstairs, and ask them to make me up a bed!"

She was no stranger to the institution; she was proud to let it be known, and, proudly, she proceeded.

"Yes," she said, ruminatingly, and looking lovingly up to the bare branches of a tree or two that were just visible by turning askew, "I was here for weeks and weeks. When those trees were full of leaves, and when I could see the leaves moving, and could hear the rain dropping on them, I was so comforted; it seemed to me just like the country. And so, you see, I shouldn't at all mind coming here again, if so be it came to be required."

Another incident of pleasantness from another patient followed. One of the back-viewed women, who proved to be a young woman, and a comely woman, and a gentle woman of her own good nature, when her face was visible and her manner could be noted, was being searched for by a friend, a patient also, and was recognised, and made to look round by a quick light tap.

"I thought I should find you!" cried the brisk new comer, as young, and as

comely, and as gentle as her friend; "I didn't like to go without. Are you better?"

"A good deal," she was answered. "But"—surprised—"you're not going, are you?"

"Yes," came the reply, with quite a little triumph. "I've been seen, and I am off, as quickly as I can."

"How nice for you," said the seated friend. "I'm so glad you're so soon. For myself, I'm afraid the doctors will go before it's my turn!"

The other patient smiled; both the patients smiled; they took pleasant leave of one another; and the one who was left sitting was as satisfied as the one who had gone, with not a speck of malice, envy, or the least uncharitableness, to mar her.

They were being treated gratuitously, it may be advanced, as reason for their patience and docility. Yes; but are there not people, and many people, receiving gift-horses constantly, who yet look the gift-horses in the mouth, from sunrise till sunset, hungry, almost, to find a defect on which they can take hold? The act of accepting, and the fact of giving nothing for what is accepted, therefore cannot pass as cause for all the order and good feeling observable. But, then, can anything pass as cause, either, for the medical profession, out of all the professions, giving, at stated hours, a large percentage of its best skill without fee or thought of it? Do lawyers retain so many hours a week on which they see gratis clients? Do artists take free portraits, and present their pictures to the impecunious, having days devoted to unpaid sittings? Do singers instruct periodically and continuously in vocalisation, and remain unsalaried? Do instrumentalists? Do any? Yet doctors devote themselves in the manner that all these levées of out-patients at all the hospitals show they devote themselves; yet doctors do this as a custom of their profession, from which no member of it shrinks. The end of which is that medicine has a badge of nobility possessed by no other profession; that medicine, if it had not too much modesty even to have thought of itself as enjoying this uniqueness, might very well be proud of it.

Well, similar small incidents to those that have been already noted continue to come. The little girl, as it happens, continues to bring the most. She reports, every two minutes about, as to what it is o'clock; she reports that so many

patients have walked straight into the other room, that so many have been attended to, and gone out; she invents a very methodical plan of meeting her mother when they have both seen their doctors, and they will be wanting to get away.

"I shall go in to Dr. Comma, you know," she arranged, "and you'll go in to Dr. Full-Stop. Then, when we come out, I'll wait for you at Dr. Full-Stop's door, and if you don't find me there, you'll come and wait at Dr. Comma's for me. Understand?"

It was a thing that might be understood, its difficulties not being special. And this was smilingly indicated.

More than a smile was given after though, when the child made her next announcement.

"Dr. Hyphen-Star has come!" she burst back and cried. "Mother, Dr. Hyphen-Star!"

When excitement ran round the whole assembly enjoyably, the patients roused themselves from their yawning, or their passiveness, or their docility, whichever was their mode, the patients became quite refreshed. One woman, though, made that old confession of her own obscurity by the old mode of enquiring dreamily of the woman next her who Dr. Hyphen-Star might be.

"Don't you know?" she was met with, surprised. "Never heard of Dr. Hyphen-Star? Why, he'll soon be the leading man of any, so they say! His private practice is immense!"

Quite immense! seemed to be the improved, though inaudible chorus from all, with a sort of reflected pride. Business went on more briskly at any rate after the last arrival, because an additional officer (no matter what his chances) naturally led to additional expedition. The room, in fact, sensibly thinned before long. Into it there came such cries from time to time, and from the roughish voice, as "Numbers up to ten for Dr. Comma!" as "Patients for Dr. Full-Stop!" as "Any other country patients!"

Out of it went woman after woman, the familiar and the obscure, the child, and her mother, till it seemed well to go out also, and see what was the finishing chapter in their contented and well-ordered arrangement.

A larger room, that, at the first glance, seemed all that there was of innovation or variety; a much larger room, and many more women, so many more women that

there were not seats for all; that women were standing in thick clusters, and in proper rows, en queue; that they were moving in rotation, or selection. But when the gas had been lighted, and things were understood, there was more difference than this to be noted. Certain ends of the room had been partitioned off as quiet consulting-rooms; there was one of these compartments for each doctor on the staff; each was closely cut off and shut in from the rest of the room, and from one another; each had the name of the doctor using it, put prominently on it for direction; each had its attendant batch, or cluster, of patients waiting near by, so that they might go in numerical order, the instant a seen patient came out.

"There, it's your turn next," one of the waiting women, a happy, chatty little creature, said to a young girl, as she pleasantly manœuvred her into place. "You stand there, ready. For your number is before mine, and then mine is next."

She might have been a railway-passenger, waiting at the pay-office to take tickets for the next excursion train, she was so cheery and—apparently—well; she might have had, moreover, plenty of provisions for a joyous journey, and welcoming friends to wait for her at the end of it. Yet this woman had been struck with fright, or grief, or some cause that had affected the nerves of her throat, she unfolded, when she was gently asked; she had been struck with it so severely, it was thought she never could be cured; she had herself given herself up to death, and her sufferings had been intense. She was not well yet, as her presence there testified; for all that, well, it was only necessary to see her, and to hear her, to be aware of how she overcame the much that was remaining with her, and to be full of admiration. It is only necessary to add that, as she and the other women emerged from the consulting-rooms, seen and satisfied, they filed up, through barriers, to the dispensary; that they handed in their prescriptions and bottles patiently, through a sliding window; that they were attended to, quickly and compassionately, by a lady dispenser—this new branch of skilled female labour having been experimented upon at this hospital, and found entirely successful. That they then were told when they were to come again, and had only to pass out, finding their way up into the streets at another side of the building, through another area-door.

A short account, now, of the grey stone

building, belonging to the grey stone stairs, and to the grey stone area, down and across which out-patients had to go. It is a building full of fascinating historical interest.

When Bolingbroke was sharing with Harley the honours, fugitive as they were, of Queen Anne's expiring government, with the Marlboroughs to wrangle about this, and Mrs. Masham to alternately help and foil the whole, profuse preparations were being made to receive a new ambassador, the Duc d'Aumont, from Louis Quatorze.

"We lost our opportunity to hire the Earl of Leicester's house for you," writes Bolingbroke, in French, to this expected and magnificent official, writing it on November 11, 1712; "which I am sorry for, because it will be difficult to find another that may suit you; however, I shall not fail to contribute my endeavours for that purpose."

The end of the endeavours was that the ambassador, with his retinue, with his ménage, with his ceremonies, his splendour, his lavish expenditure, his foreign refinements and graces, was taken to the very spot of ground where the out-door patients have been seen at waiting-time on this women's afternoon; and that, in full peruke, and buckram, and powder, and face-patches, his excellency held his costly court there. It was Powis House then; built by William Herbert, Marquis of Powis. This was the Powis who was with James the Second in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne; who was excluded by name from the Bill of Indemnity issued by William and Mary; who was with the Chevalier when his mock-highness was proclaimed king at Warkworth, Morpeth, and Alnwick; who was, for all this work and more like it, in 1715 committed to the Tower, and rendered unable, consequently, to do much residence at his own stately town-mansion in person. And Powis House was worthy of the choice that fell upon it by Bolingbroke, undoubtedly. Great Ormond Street, where it stood, and stands, was the resort then of those who loved the beautiful, and who had the leisure to go and seek it. Says a Critical Reviewer of the sights of the metropolis, writing even as late as 1734: "Ormond Street is another place of pleasure, and that side of it next the fields is, beyond question, one of the most charming situations about town." Was it not fit for Bolingbroke to fix therein the elegant

French peer? Close by was Southampton Row, which the same Critical Reviewer says was "built for the sake of the prospect before it, but for my part, I should be uneasy at residing there, for want of shelter from the wind in winter, and the sun in summer:" a state of things that must have given the ambassador a favourable idea of English climate, and have kept him pleasantly ignorant of London fogs. As for the house itself, as it was when M. le Duc was driven up to it after Bolingbroke had offered him a frigate or two to convey his equipage across the Channel, and the queen's orders for two ships then in the Downs, it must have been grand, for the ambassador was a grand man. "I expect you with impatience," wrote Bolingbroke to him from Whitehall, on September 26, 1712, just before the failure to hire Leicester House. "The king" (Louis the Fourteenth) "makes the Duc d'Aumont knight of his orders before his departure," writes De Torcy from Versailles to Bolingbroke, delightedly. "At present my time passes unpleasantly enough," writes Bolingbroke to the Duc himself, a year after, "but I hope to be recompensed during the four days I am to pass with you." "From my stable, among dogs and horses, in the midst of the most profound retreat, I have nothing to wish for to make me completely happy but the conversation of the dear Duc d'Aumont," writes Bolingbroke to him again. "Wherever I am, the Duc d'Aumont shall certainly not be forgotten. I embrace you a thousand and a thousand times; may I cease to live when I cease to be with perfect devotion yours," and so forth. All of which, of course, meant riches, and gaiety, superb entertainments, brilliant salons, and Powis House must have been of the sort to suit it. There was masquerading there—M. le Duc's own novelty. It was introduced "into this city in our time," writes Steele bitterly, in *The Freethinker*, "by a French duke, whose chief business was to seduce us by specious appearances, and to undermine the virtue of the nation by such methods of luxury." There was gaming there—high gaming—for the Grand Monarque had to give his grand representative a sum of one hundred thousand livres, together with a pension of fifty thousand livres for four years, in order that his finances might, in some way, be set right after what has been justly called his vain, and ostentatious, and ruinous embassy. There was plotting there—plots about the Pretender, and plots about the peace, all



of them so much identified with the Duc d'Aumont, in his lace and flippancy, his perfumes and plush lappels, that the anti-Stuart party, following the leadership of Steele (then M.P., and on his trial for anti-Stuart writings, and being voted to be expelled the House), became an anti-D'Aumont party into the bargain, and grew enraged. They sang ballads about this luxurious French Mounseer they hated—ballads in English, ballads in French, and scurrilous all; they met this luxurious French Mounseer they hated, and insulted him to his patched face in the open streets; they wrote anonymous letters, threatening the luxurious Mounseer that they would burn his hired Powis House about his ears; till at last there came small riotings from one small cause and another conjoined, and there was really heard the cry of "Fire!" from Mounseer's splendid residence, the flames leaped through it, and it was levelled to the ground.

The Powis House, therefore, in which out-patients have been seen to sit during their waiting-time, on this women's afternoon, is not the absolute Powis House to which Bolingbroke, and Harley, and the Abbé Gualtier, and Mesnager, and a throng of gay others, were carried, in sedan-chairs and gilt coaches, during the occupancy of the Duc d'Aumont. This present Powis House is the one that was rebuilt after the fire; and touching the rebuilding there is told a pretty story. It is said that Louis Quatorze, desiring to be beholden to no fire-insurance company for salvage-money, or restitution money, or the like, and not conceiving it politic to adopt the suggestion that his ambassador's residence had been burnt of intent, insisted upon doing the rebuilding at his own cost. It is possible. It is said, though, that Louis Quatorze, in rebuilding, rebuilt to hit his ambassador's requirements. One of these was that his excellency should fish; and the king, it is asserted, had the new roof constructed so that it should hold an artificial pond, artificially stocked; by the side of which M. le Duc could hold his rod and lines, soothed by the charming prospect, and benefited by the fine air, and could angle, and could angle, and—be amused. It will not hold. For M. le Duc d'Aumont only held office for a year. Powis House could not have been inhabited by him, and burnt, and replanned, and rebuilt, in such an insignificant space of time; and—that part of the pretty little story goes.

The matter now left to be mentioned is confined to very small dimensions. In 1734, the Critical Reviewer mentions the rebuilt edifice thus: "Powis House is a building of much beauty and elegance, the lower part of it, in particular, has a very good claim to applause, but then the attic storey is monstrous, out of proportion, and no way akin to taste. To this we may add that the house itself is pent up for want of room, and stands greatly in need of wings to make it perfect and complete." The house itself, at the present day, being not nearly so much pent-up for want of room, seeing that it has been much enlarged, stands only in need of being better known to make it perfect and complete. It is the Homœopathic Hospital for General Cases—for children as well as women and men—lying quite half a mile away from any other hospital applied to the same purposes, and whilst allowing for the wide difference of judgment that exists as to the advisability of homœopathic treatment—a question for discussion in medical journals, not in this—there can be no two thoughts about the advantage of instant application of skilful surgery the moment it is required; and as the difference between conveying an injured person to rest and relief near at hand, and conveying him over another half-mile of ground to get it, might prove to be the exact difference between life and death, it is well it should be remembered that there is this extra haven in Great Ormond Street, and that, exactly like similar institutions, it has its doors hospitably open night and day.

Whilst the question of receiving paying patients in hospitals, too, is securing much public attention, the committee in Great Ormond Street are quietly taking paying patients in, and will be able in due time to report as to results.

#### THE DEATH OF THE YEAR.

A CLOUD came out of the golden west,  
A bell rang over the silent air,  
The sun-god hurried away to rest,  
Flushing with kisses each cloud he prest,  
And oh! but the day was fair!

"How brightly the year goes out," they said;  
"The glow of the sunset lingers long,  
Knowing the year will be over and dead,  
Its sad hours over—its sweet hours fled—  
With service of Evensong."

"How sadly the year came in," they said.  
I listened and wondered in dusk of night,  
To me no year that might come instead  
Of the old friend numbered among the dead  
Could ever be half so bright.

The sun-kissed clouds grew pale and grey,  
The bells hung silent in high mid-air,  
Waiting to ring the year away  
In strains that were ever too glad and gay  
For me—as I listened there.

Oh, hearts! that beat in a million breasts,  
Oh, lips! that utter the same old phrase,  
I wonder that never a sorrow rests  
In words you utter to friends and guests  
In the new year's strange new days!

Is it just the same as it used to be?  
Have new years only a gladder sense?  
For ever and always it seems to me  
That no new face can be sweet to see  
As the old ones we have found.

There is no cloud in the darkened west,  
The bell is silent in misty air,  
The year has gone to its last long rest,  
And I who loved and who knew it best  
Shall meet it—God knows where!

### THE MYSTERY OF GLAMIS.

THE mystery, or rather the many mysteries, of Glamis are so currently spoken of in Scottish society, that any attempt to make them public can hardly be regarded as an unveiling of family secrets. Among persons of a certain rank in Scotland, the stories here collected are so freely discussed daily, that it is fair to assume the impossibility of launching the supernatural as a topic of conversation without eliciting from some person present a remark bearing on the Glamis mystery. As evening gathers, and tea is dispensed in the cosy drawing-room of a Scottish castle or country house, the familiar topic seizes upon all with a sort of hideous fascination. Various versions are compared, and in many cases personal experiences are recounted; for the Lyons have ever been a hospitable race, and their famous castle has been visited by "persons of quality" without end.

It is my intention in compiling this curious catalogue of romantic incidents, to confine myself strictly to historic and well-authenticated facts, without any attempt to heighten their effect by artistic means. I also do not aver the absolute truth of any one single statement. When I say that the tales are uncontradicted, I think them historic enough to relate. They are given to me on authority above all suspicion. I may add that I am an utter sceptic as to all assumed supernatural manifestations. For myself, I think such things absolutely impossible, and, if they occurred to me, should, when I got over my fright, refer any unusual appearances to my own physical condition. I have, therefore, no sort of sympathy with ghost stories or mysteries of

any kind; but simply narrate what has been given to me on good authority.

Considerable force is lent to the Glamis stories by two recent events, one of which I will tell at once. A lady very well known in London society, an artistic and social celebrity, wealthy beyond all doubts of the future, and what is called a very cultivated and instructed, but clear-headed and perhaps slightly matter-of-fact woman, went to stay at Glamis Castle for the first time. She was allotted very handsome apartments, just on the point of junction between the new buildings—perhaps a hundred or two hundred years old—and the very ancient part of the castle. The rooms were handsomely furnished; no gaunt carvings grinned from the walls; no grim tapestry swung to and fro making strange figures look still stranger by the flickering fire-light; all was smooth, cosy, and modern, and the guest retired to bed without a thought of the mysteries of Glamis.

In the morning she appeared at the breakfast-table quite cheerful and self-possessed. To the enquiry how she had slept she replied: "Well, thanks, very well, up to four o'clock in the morning. But your Scottish carpenters seem to come to work very early. I suppose they put up their scaffolding quickly, though, for they are quiet now." This speech produced a dead silence, and the speaker saw with astonishment that the faces of members of the family were very pale.

She was asked, as she valued the friendship of all there, never to speak to them on that subject again; there had been no carpenters at Glamis Castle for months past. This fact, whatever it may be worth, is absolutely established so far as the testimony of a single witness can establish anything. The lady was awakened by a loud knocking and hammering as if somebody were putting up a scaffold, and the noise did not alarm her in the least. On the contrary she took it for an accident due to the presumed matutinal habits of the people. She knew of course that there were stories about Glamis, but had not the remotest idea that the hammering she had heard was connected with any story. She had regarded it simply as an annoyance and was glad to get to sleep after an unrestful time; but had no notion of the noise being supernatural until informed of it at the breakfast-table.

To what particular event in the stormy annals of the Lyon family the hammering is connected is quite unknown except to

the members of the family, but there is no lack of legends possible and impossible to account for any sights or sounds in the magnificent old feudal edifice. Glamis Castle, or rather part of it, is of immense antiquity. It is perhaps the oldest inhabited castle in Scotland, but has undergone, save in the central tower, repairs and rebuildings various and sundry. It is not, like Traquair, an old house which has remained almost intact since the reign of English Stephen, but the core of picturesque Glamis is possibly older still. If there be a little of truth in the tradition that Duncan was murdered by Macbeth there instead of at Cawdor Castle on the Nairn, some stronghold must have been in existence at Glamis before the Conquest, but arguments of this kind go for very little. It is not more certain that Duncan came to his end within doors than that either Cawdor or Glamis was the castle described as having a "pleasant seat," and that "coign of vantage" too-often quoted by hurried reporters. Forres being mentioned in Shakespeare's tragedy strengthens the claim of Cawdor Castle, or would do so were not the building certainly not older than the fourteenth century. At Glamis the local tradition of the king's murder is of great antiquity, and even the very room in which the deed was done was formerly pointed out. But there are traditions and traditions, and it is very doubtful whether the room shown could have been built at the date assigned to Macbeth's crime. Still the same might be said for it as for Cawdor—that the present buildings cover the site of a much older structure.

To understand some of the following stories it will be necessary to understand that Glamis has in part been brutally modernised by a "disciple of Kent," who made it "more parkish," as he called it, by rasing all the exterior defences and bringing, as Sir Walter Scott says, "his mean and paltry gravel-walk up to the very door out of which, deluded by the name, we might have imagined Lady Macbeth (with the form and features of Siddons) issuing forth to welcome King Duncan."

This "disciple of Kent," or another of his way of thinking, has added the lower wings, which form a large part of the inhabited castle. But the general aspect of the place, with its forest of turrets, is due to the architect employed by the first Earl of Strathmore, between 1675 and 1687. The very old part of the castle is included in the square tower, with walls

fifteen feet thick, which overlooks the whole. It was from this part of the castle that the noise as of masons or carpenters at work proceeded on the occasion previously referred to; and it is the unquestionable truthfulness of that strange narrative which induces me to briefly recount the various stories which cluster round this perhaps pre-historic tower.

It would seem that the thanedom of Glamis was only obtained by the family of Lyon in 1371-2, the first incumbent of that race having been Sir John Lyon, feudal baron of Fortevist, and son-in-law and secretary to King Robert the Second, from whom he received the grant of the lordship. The career of the Lyons began stormily from the moment they brought to Glamis their "lion-cup," the original of Scott's "Blessed Bear of Bradwardine," and a kind of family palladium, like the "Luck of Edenhall," in possession of Sir Richard Musgrave, of Edenhall, in Cumberland, the shivering of which only occurred in the imagination of the poet. Sir John Lyon, who was Great Chamberlain of Scotland, fell in a duel with Sir James Lindsay, of Crawford, at the Moss of Palhall, in Forfarshire, in 1383. His son, the grandson of King Robert the Second, married a granddaughter of the same, and, like his son and successor, lived through times when heads sat lightly on men's shoulders. The son was advanced, as was natural in a person of such illustrious descent, to the dignity of a peer of parliament as Lord Glamis in 1445. For several generations after this event the Lyons appear to have reigned peaceably at Glamis until a frightful catalogue of sorrow was opened by the accusation brought against the widow of the sixth Lord Glamis, Janet Douglas, second daughter of George, Master of Angus, and sister of Archibald, sixth Earl of Angus, and granddaughter of "Bell-the-Cat." This lady had, after the death of her husband, married Archibald Campbell, of Kepneith, and was together with her husband, her son Lord Glamis, his kinsman John Lyon, and an old priest, indicted for designs against the life of King James the Fifth by poison or witchcraft, with the intention of restoring the House of Angus to its original glory. This was one of the causes célèbres of Scotland. The Douglasses were no longer strong enough to protect their kinswoman, and the unfortunate woman actually suffered death at the stake, on the Castle Hill at Edinburgh,



in 1537. Her husband, Campbell, was dashed to pieces while attempting to escape from the castle. Her son, Lord Glamis, was also sentenced to death, but respited until he should be of full age, his estates being meanwhile declared forfeit, and himself closely confined. The most horrible part of the tragedy is, perhaps, that the accuser confessed at last that his entire story was a fabrication. Lord Glamis was then released, and restored to his estates and honours. During the period of sequestration the castle was frequently occupied by James the Fifth, who is reported to have been lying sick at Glamis while his daughter, the ill-starred Mary, was born at Linlithgow. It was on this occasion that the light-hearted monarch observed of the crown of Scotland and of his own family, "It came with a lass, and will go with a lass."

The Glamis judicial tragedy was followed by no especial disaster till 1578, when John, the eighth Lord Glamis, was killed in an accidental encounter between his followers and those of the Earl of Crawford—the old feud with the Lindsays having apparently broken out again. In the following century the title of earls, first of Kinghorne and then of Strathmore and Kinghorne—the second charter—was obtained by the builder of the castle as at present, for the most part, seen—that is, all but the ancient square tower and kitchen and the more modern lower wings. The grandson of this great noble, and great-uncle of the celebrated Chesterfield, was killed in the rebellion of 1715 at Sheriffmuir, and was succeeded by his brother Charles, the sixth earl, who (is it not written in the Book of Burke?) died on the 11th of May, "in consequence of an accidental wound received in a scuffle." Burke's peerage is not a family history, and many events must necessarily be passed rapidly over. The scuffle was not anent a political quarrel, albeit political quarrels enough and to spare were on the hands of the Lyons, who had entertained the old Pretender and his suite to the number of eighty at Glamis Castle in 1715. It was a more awkward matter—a duel over the gaming-table. As the story runs, the old feud between Lindsays and Lyons had so far healed over that the members of the two families dined, and drank, and dined together like fine old Scottish gentlemen as they were. According to local tradition, the play one night at Glamis was very high, and when its owner had lost all his money, he staked

his estates one after the other against the victorious player. At last Glamis itself was set on the turn of a card—and lost. Then the head of the house, maddened by his losses, accused his guest of cheating. The reply was a blow, swords were drawn, and after a few passes the victorious guest ran Lord Strathmore through the body, and thus sacrificed all his winnings, through not being so wise a man as Lord Foppington, who, when his younger brother, Tom Fashion, strove to provoke him, displayed far better discretion. The nephew of the Lord Strathmore killed over the card-table was in the East India Company's service, and was among the captives taken at Cossimbazar, and murdered by order of Mir Cossim, Nawab of Bengal, at Patna, in 1763. Next into the family came the great Bowes estate. Mary Eleanor Bowes, who brought Streatham Castle and Gibside to the Lyons, was the heroine of one of the most remarkable adventures of the last century. Married in 1767 to Lord Strathmore, who assumed thereupon the name of Bowes, and the mother of five children, this Lady Strathmore was left a widow in 1776. Upon this young and attractive woman, wealthy, well-born, and well-titled, Mr. Andrew Robinson Stoney, of King's County, cast his fine Irish eye. It is well-known that to the general amusements of drinking and duelling, the Irish gentleman of that period occasionally added the excitement of abduction. This was all very well in remote parts of Ireland where no process-server durst show his face, but it was not quite so easy to carry off an English or Scotch countess from the midst of her own retainers, who would have made short work of such a person as Barry Lyndon. So artifice was added to boldness, the "lion's-skin eked out with the fox's." The Dowager Lady Strathmore was startled one day to hear, partly from correspondence, and partly by means of the public prints, that her name had been spoken lightly of in London, and that her quarrel having been taken up by Mr. Stoney, he had been wounded to death and was then lying on his couch awaiting the last summons. Presently came another letter to say that he was dying and wished to see the beautiful cause of his death before he closed his eyes. Had the story been well authenticated, the appeal would doubtless have been very strong, but apparently no pains were taken to sift the narrative; but Lady Strathmore, whose vanity, gratitude, and

pity were alike moved, went to see Mr. Stoney lying sick unto death at his lodgings in London. There she found the surgeon, who had no hope of prolonging life beyond a few days, and the second who had witnessed his principal's gallant conduct at the duel. So far as it went the evidence was complete. The dying man was in bed attended by his only friends—his doctor and second. Lady Strathmore, who seems never to have had the slightest suspicion, was deeply moved, and expressed her appreciation of her cavalier's devotion in appropriate terms. Then came the important part of the scheme. As he was dying: in short, to all intents and purposes a dead man: would not the lady for whom he died marry him "in articulo mortis?" It was merely a form, but it would reward him amply for the loss of his life. It is almost impossible to believe, were not every circumstance perfectly authenticated, that without ascertaining from independent sources that any duel had taken place, Lady Strathmore married him—but she did so, nevertheless. No sooner was he married than he recovered from his imaginary wound, seized upon his wife, and carried her off into the country with him. He had secured, as he thought, her person and immense fortune, but he had flown too high, and his wife's friends interfered and rescued her from the fortune-hunter's grasp. It is believed that a handsome annuity satisfied his claims, and relieved Lady Strathmore from his presence. The brother-in-law of this lady, who succeeded to the earldom, closes the list of Lyons remarkable for their misfortunes. He died on the day after his marriage, being at that time fifty-one years old.

It will be seen by the above brief résumé of their history that the Lyons, handsome, courteous, and courageous, have been a fateful family; but one seeks in vain in their known adventures for what is known, or rather unknown, as "The Glamis Mystery."

To deal with what is known, there is no doubt as to the existence of a family secret. It is never known to more than three persons—the Earl of Strathmore for the time being, the heir-apparent, Lord Glamis, if he have attained his majority, and the factor, an important functionary in Scotland. It may be imagined that there is excitement in Forfarshire when a Lord Glamis comes of age. On the night before his twenty-first birthday he is solemnly made aware by the extant Lord Strath-

more and the factor of Glamis, of the terrible secret to be kept by him until the majority of another Lord Glamis, or at his discretion, if unmarried, till the coming of age of the heir-presumptive, and also till the appointment of another factor of the property. Why the factor should be instructed in this terrible matter is a question which has excited, and continues to excite, the Caledonian mind to a remarkable degree. If the office of factor were hereditary there would be an apparent reason for taking such an important functionary into the family confidence. But this is not the case in Scotland as a rule. In fact, the balance of experience is very greatly on the other side. The factor is sometimes a poor relation of a great house, but frequently a retired officer or a country gentleman unconnected with his employers by ties of blood. There is nothing in the occupation of a factor greatly in excess of that of an agent, saving that he is resident on the property instead of living in the nearest large town. There is no reason why the connection between employer and factor should not be brought to an end at any time by individual or mutual dissatisfaction. There is, however, no record of any factor having disclosed any inkling of the Mystery of Glamis.

The first notion of a thorough-paced sceptic like myself—that is to say, so long as he is in a lighted room with plenty of good company—is that the entire mystery is a hoax; a "secret de polichinelle;" a whisky dream which has lived on into the age of tea; that the mountain of conjecture conceals not even the smallest of real actual mice; that the story is like the vapour which arose from the sealed vessel mentioned in the Arabian Nights—with this difference that the smoke of the Scottish story rose from a toddy-jug. All this is passing well till the toddy is finished, and one has retired to one's own chamber at the end of the old gallery—there is always an old gallery in the best country-houses one visits—then as the wind howls and threatens to tear the shutters off their hinges, an awkward recollection supervenes. As a Strathmore a Strathmore succeeds, there is generally much talk of the old story being exploded at last. Gay gallants in lace-ruffles, beaus, bucks, bloods, and dandies, have until their twenty-first birthday, made light of the family mystery, and some have gone so far as to make after-dinner promises to "hoist the old ghost with his own petard," and tell

the whole stupid old story in the smoking-room at night after the coming of age humbug was all over. This promise has been made more than once. It has been pledged in burgundy and Tokay, in Laffite and champagne, in steaming toddy and in cooling lemon-squash. But it has never been kept. No heir to the Strathmore peerage has revealed the secret. On the morrow, when all looked for an explanation of the terrible mystery, they were met by a courteous but cold refusal: a simple statement that the fulfilment of the rash promise was impossible, a request to say no more about it, and thus the matter has ended so far. Thus far fact.

Again we step into the dim border-land which separates tradition from fiction. It is said that once a visitor stayed at Glamis Castle for a few days, and, sitting up late one moonlight night, saw a face appear at the window opposite to him. The owner of the face—it was very pale, with great sorrowful eyes—appeared to wish to attract attention; but vanished suddenly from the window as if plucked suddenly away by superior strength. For a long while the horror-stricken guest gazed at the window in the hope that the pale face and great sad eyes would appear again. Nothing was seen at the window, but presently horrible shrieks penetrated even the thick walls of the castle, and rent the night air. An hour later, a dark huddled figure, like that of an old decrepit woman, carrying something in a bundle, came into the waning moonlight, and presently vanished.

Several years afterwards, the same visitor was travelling in a remote part of Italy, and was compelled to accept the hospitality of a monastery, where he heard that at a neighbouring nunnery was a sorely-afflicted and outraged sister, whose great luminous eyes were the only remnants of what should have been great beauty. She had neither tongue nor hands, one having been torn out and the others cut off, and she was strictly watched in consideration of the vast sum paid by the great family to which she belonged. She was supposed to have learned by accident some terrible secret, to conceal which every means, short of murder, had been adopted.

An awful story it stands, but tales of tongueless and handless women, must, like those about apples, be received with caution. The theme is that of Tereus and the Sisters Procne and Philomela, with the improve-

ments and additions of the author of Titus Andronicus, be the same Shakespeare or not. There is, however, a more modern story of a stonemason, who having assisted at Glamis Castle on one memorable occasion, and having discovered, or being suspected of having discovered, more than it was his province to know, was supplied with a little fortune as the condition of emigration, and complete silence. Perhaps this modern form of oubliette is hardly so efficacious as the ancient one, but it is the only one possible now.

The employment of a stonemason is explained by the conditions under which the mystery is revealed to successive heirs and factors. The abode of the dread secret is in a part of the castle, also haunted by the apparition of a bearded man, who flits about at night, but without committing any other objectionable action. What connection, if any, the bearded spectre may have with the mystery, is not even guessed. He hovers at night over the couches of children for an instant, and then vanishes. The secret itself abides in a room—a secret chamber—the very situation of which, beyond a general idea that it is in the most ancient part of the castle, is unknown. Where walls are fifteen feet thick it is not impossible to have a chamber so concealed, that none but the initiated can guess its position. It was once attempted by a madcap party of guests to discover the locality of the secret chamber, by hanging their towels out of window, and thus deciding in favour of any window from which no spotless banner waved; but this escapade, which is said to have been ill-received by those most interested, ended in nothing but a vague conclusion that the old square tower must be the spot sought.

It seems to have been forgotten by these harum-scarum mystery-hunters that a secret chamber might well be like the curious places of concealment called “priests’ holes” so common in old English country-houses, and the only mystery whereof is how the unfortunate hidden tenants could breathe in them.

It is in the secret chamber of Glamis Castle that the mystery is revealed to the next heir, and to the new factor, when one is appointed; this much is known beyond all possible doubt. It is also assumed, from the stonemason story, and the mysterious sounds frequently heard, that the secret chamber is approached by a passage duly closed with masonry after



every visit. This latter conclusion may or may not be correct, but the existence of a mystery of some kind concealed within a secret chamber is fairly well made out.

What is it? is the question asked in every great country-house over the Border. There are grim stories enough connected with families now great and prosperous, but the descendants of the actors in them show as little sensitiveness on the score of the things done and suffered in their ancestors' strongholds, as our Royal family does concerning the tales of Count Konigsmarck and the hapless Lady of Ahldew. It was a way our forefathers had of settling family affairs, and not a soul troubles his head about it now. In fact, not to have a Banshee, or a family ghost of some kind, is rather a reproach than otherwise to a dignified race. A member of one of the oldest families in England once actually apologised to a guest for the absence of that domestic spectre, without which no gentleman's ancestral roof-tree is complete. So it may be inferred that the Mystery of Glamis is something more than an old story of cruelty and bitter wrong.

The ingenuity of the higher order of gossips has suggested several solutions partly based upon such stories as have already been set forth, and partly of a purely imaginative character. One hypothesis, woven into fiction not long since by a writer of high reputation, is that the supposed witch—the dowager Lady Glamis burnt on the Castle Hill at Edinburgh—actually was in commerce with the Evil One, and that her familiar demon, an actually embodied and visible fiend, endures unto this day shut from the light in Glamis Castle. A variation of this wild story is that upon the noble family of Lyon rests an hereditary curse like those supposed to weigh upon the Duncombes and the Pophams but of a more awful kind. At certain intervals a vampire is born into the family. The creature can hardly be destroyed, and is therefore concealed from the light of day till its term of life is run. Another supposition is that the secret chamber contains proofs that the titles and estates are either forfeit to the crown, or that the owners are not the rightful heirs. This theory seems as wild as the others, for such proofs could be easier destroyed than preserved. As it stands the Mystery of Glamis is a file for Scottish wits to bite upon, and can furnish suggestive text for the ghost-story half-hour round the Christmas fire.

### A PRECIOUS PARASITE.

THE one true parasite of British growth has no compeer, for none of its kind has ever been held in such high honour as the mistletoe—sacred alike with Scandinavian, Persian, Briton, and Saxon, and venerated alike by Greek and Roman for its magical and medicinal attributes.

While giving it all credit on the latter score, Pliny, it must be confessed, rather detracts from the mistletoe's merits by making its general efficiency depend upon the gathering it at the time of the full moon, without the employment of any iron tool in the operation; and its particular efficiency in epilepsy upon the plant escaping contact with earth: three conditions carefully ensured by the Druids ere they distributed mistletoe cuttings to our aboriginal ancestors that they might protect themselves against witchcraft and poison, and cure themselves of divers mortal ailments without troubling the doctors of the period.

When there were no longer any Druids in the land to gather the holy plant with due solemnity, it was gathered by the people themselves with no solemnity at all, but, if Aubrey tells truth, with very unpleasant consequences, for he gravely relates how some ill-advised folk cut the mistletoe from an oak at Norwood to sell to the London apothecaries for ten shillings each time, "and one fell lame shortly after; soon after each of the others lost an eye;" and a rash fellow who, unwarned by these examples, adventured to fell the oak itself, broke his leg within a very short time of committing the sacrilegious act.

The fact that the apothecaries of the seventeenth century would pay such a price for mistletoe shows that it was still in repute as a medicine. Boyle lauded its virtues loudly, telling of a young lady of great birth, long troubled with an almost hereditary epileptic distemper, who was wearied by courses of physic prescribed by the most famous doctors of the time, and instead of mending in health, grew worse and worse, until she would have eight or ten severe fits in a day. One day she fell down suddenly as if dead; but coming to again, an ancient gentleman, who happened casually to be present, strongly advised her to take as much powder of the true mistletoe of the oak as would lie upon a sixpence, early every morning, in black cherry-water or beer; advice followed by the sufferer with such good effect that she

herself assured Boyle that she never had one fit after the first dose. The gentleman who came so opportunely to the distressed damsel's relief declared that he had never failed to cure epilepsy with mistletoe-powder, when he was able to administer the right sort—that from the oak.

Why oak mistletoe should alone be of avail it is not easy to understand. Nicholas Culpepper, the author of the once popular English Physician, held that that plant was of such a blessed nature as to deserve being called Wood of the Holy Cross, since its leaves and berries possessed such subtle properties that, given in powder for forty days together, it was a sure panacea for apoplexy, palsy, and falling sickness; but he was by no means willing to admit that such virtues belonged only to oak mistletoe. "I do not question," says he, "that it is under the dominion of the sun, and can also take for granted that which grows upon oaks participates something of the nature of Jupiter, because an oak is one of his trees; as also that which grows upon pear-trees and apple-trees partakes something of this nature, because he rules those trees, and it draws sap from the tree it grows on, having no root of its own. But why that should have most virtues that grows upon oaks I know not, unless because it is rarest and hardest to come by; and our college's opinion is in this contrary to the Scriptures, which saith: 'God's tender mercies are on all his works;' and so it is. Let the College of Physicians walk contrary to Him as they please, and that is as contrary as the east is to the west."

One member of that derided body was of the same mind as the astrological herbalist. Believing that he owed a debt to the world, which sadly needed a general anti-convulsive remedy, and that it would be highly criminal to let another mistletoe season pass without making known what a treasure God Almighty every year presented to mankind, from which nobody, or at most very few, had received any benefit, Sir John Colbatch published, in 1714, *A Dissertation Concerning Mistletoe, a Most Wonderful Specific Remedy for the Cure of Convulsive Distempers*; calculated for the Benefit of the Poor as well as the Rich, and hereby recommended for the Common Good of Mankind.

From this tract we learn that its author had a private as well as a public motive in seeking a remedy for the distressing ailments in question; having a very terrible instance of an epileptic case in a young

man most near and dear to him, which had for five or six years occasioned him much sad and serious reflection; during which time his relative had gone from bad to worse, and became cataleptic, although trial had been made of the most vaunted remedies of all ages, and recourse had to the most eminent physicians of Colbatch's acquaintance.

Being one day upon a journey, Sir John came upon some hazel-trees plentifully stocked with mistletoe, and it flashed upon his mind that there must be something extraordinary in the uncommon and beautiful plant, which must have been designed for nobler uses than to feed the thrushes, and to hang in houses to scare away evil spirits. Full of this new-born idea, he set about enquiring into the nature of the parasite, ultimately concluding that mistletoe was probably capable of subduing convulsive disorders; and that it was to a knowledge of the properties of this divine remedy that the Druids were indebted for the almost divine honours paid to them in old time.

Having convinced himself of this, Colbatch resolved to put his theory to a practical test as speedily as possible, but found it easier to resolve than to do, since oak mistletoe, the only mistletoe recommended by the authorities as good for anything, was something more than scarce. He had never seen any himself, and could only find two men more fortunate in that respect. In this strait he bethought him that there was no valid reason why mistletoe growing upon the crab, lime, pear, apple, or any other tree, should not be just as useful as that growing on the oak, arguing that it was doubtful if the plant derived any particular virtue from the tree that bore it, seeing it was most vigorous when the tree had shed its leaves and spent its sap, and therefore in all likelihood derived its nourishment from the air alone.

This simplified matters, and at the end of December our physician obtained a quantity of mistletoe from the limes in one of the parks at Hampton Court. The leaves, berries, and tenderer twigs he dried in a baker's oven, previous to reducing them to fine powder, while the larger stalks were retained for making infusions and decoctions. By the time this was done, Colbatch's young friend had come to such a pass, physically and mentally, that all he hoped to effect was to afford him some little relief, and render the brief remainder of his life more endurable; so he at once set to work, "without any regard

to the moon," by administering daily half-a-dozen boluses of mistletoe-powder and syrup of pionies, and sundry doses of an infusion of mistletoe-stalks. For a month the patient had never a fit, and, persevering with the treatment, Sir John had the satisfaction of seeing the poor youth once again able to ride and to read, until at the end of three years he suddenly died, of course not of his old complaint. Dr. Cole tried the remedy, with still better results, upon a young fellow of sprightly genius, whose fits had so affected his nerves and weakened his joints, as to render him incapable of lifting the weight of a few ounces, holding a pen in his fingers, or walking except with great difficulty. After taking mistletoe-powder in a cephalic vehicle for a few months the fits vanished, the patient could walk and even run with comfort, and was also able to write elegantly.

Sir John himself effected a perfect cure in a bad case of St. Vitus's dance, and rendered an excellent gentlewoman, who had laboured under convulsive disorders for twenty years, such good service that she was able to enjoy life as much as anyone else. In the course of ten years he claimed to have cured or relieved a great number of sufferers, rich and poor, young and old, but frankly owns to failing in four instances: one, that of a patient whose fits only came in the night-time; one that of a young man who wanted clothes against cold, and the commonest necessities of life; a third when the patient's fits had something peculiar about them; and a fourth, a young woman, whose distress of mind from reduced circumstances eluded the force of the medicine. Nevertheless he insists that he had proved mistletoe-powder to be as certain a specific for epilepsy as Peruvian bark was for quartan ague, and mistletoe-berries, swallowed whole, to be the greatest known restorer of decayed nature, provided they were washed down with generous wine.

Sir John winds up his dissertation by appealing to his brother-physicians to take pattern by him, and by suggesting to irregular practitioners that they would find it to their advantage to do likewise. "Far the greater number of the sick," he writes, "are commended to the care of ignorant pretenders. Now even these people would be glad to recover their patients, for thereby they would establish a reputation, and secure a livelihood. For the meanest of these intruders mistletoe is the properest remedy; it costs little, will do no hurt but

eminent good, and give them fame; while if it fails of success, since their patients are sure not to be sufferers by it, they can receive little damage." Whether Colbatch's enthusiastic advocacy induced the profession to adopt mistletoe-medicine is more than we know, but, in 1725, Shaw says: "The use of this medicine is still continued with tolerable success, but many question whether it be a specific for the epilepsy." A quarter of a century later Dr. Mead gave it its quietus by pronouncing it "from experience" a superstitious and inefficacious medicine, and mistletoe-powder ceased to figure in the materia medica. But for all that, the mistletoe, unless kissing goes out of favour, will ever be held a precious parasite.

## VISITED ON THE CHILDREN.

BY THEO GIFT.

### CHAPTER XIII. JENNY DIFFERS.

"My dear Sybil, what a horrid woman, and how could you be dragged into saying you would go to see her!" Jenny exclaimed, as the sisters, released at last, turned their steps homewards. "You are not half-severe enough in putting people down. I did my best, but it wasn't much good, and I hoped you would second me."

Sybil laughed. She was still looking a little flushed and excited, just enough to make her prettier than ever, and Gareth had thought so, as for the second time he took her hand in bidding her good-bye. His eyes said as much; but fortunately she was as unconscious of their meaning as of the outraged state of Jenny's feelings.

"Was Mrs. Jacobson pushing? I didn't notice it," she said. "I thought she seemed very kind, and I did go there once, you know; Lion took me. What didn't you like in her, Jenny?"

"What?" repeated Jenny. The question took away her breath. She had never contemplated the idea that Sybil would not agree with her, or that there could be two opinions on the subject. "Why, everything. Her over-talk, and her over-dress, and her lisp, and even her colour; for I am sure it was artificial. Why, Sybil, I should have thought she was just the woman you and Lion would have abominated."

There could be no suspicion as to artificiality in Sybil's colour, it came too readily; but with it there was a look of displeasure at present, and she answered more decidedly than was at all her wont.



"I am not given to 'abominating' people Jenny, and I think it is a pity to use such strong expressions, even if Lion does. Besides, I hardly fancy he would have taken me to Mrs. Jacobson's if he had had such a feeling against her, and I don't think it is charitable to run down other women in that way. You will make very few friends if you get into the habit of it."

It was on Jenny's lips to say that she would not care to make many friends of the Mrs. Jacobson stamp; but she was so petrified by her sister's tone, that for the moment she hardly found words to answer at all. What had she said that was so uncharitable? Was it about the only too apparent rouge on Mrs. Jacobson's cheeks? Well, perhaps she might have been wrong in her suspicions. She must have been, in expressing them, or Sybil would not have been so vexed. Sybil at any rate was sure to be right.

"Was I running her down?" she said good-temperedly. "I didn't mean to do so, poor woman, and perhaps she can't help her lip. Still, Sybil, I must own I thought her very pushing; and if mamma had been there I expect she would have said the same. Surely you don't like her?"

"I don't either like or dislike people I know nothing about," Sybil answered with the same slight touch of petulance; "but as for mamma—— Well, Jenny, you know as well as I that it is not fair to quote her, seeing that she hardly ever takes to any one. If we were to do exactly as mamma does we might as well live in a hermitage at once; but I don't suppose she always shunned society as she does now. And we have not even her excuse. We are not widows or—or middle-aged people."

"I don't want to shun society, I am sure," said Jenny, feeling herself put in the wrong; but hardly knowing how. "Surely, however, one can tell good style from bad, and there is a difference between shutting oneself up in a hermitage and being a little particular. Indeed, I thought that you would have been more vexed than I, because you were left to walk behind with that handsome, fast-looking man who stared so rudely and shook hands when he was introduced to you as coolly as if——"

"He knew me already," Sybil put in, her cheeks more crimson than pink now, but speaking in a much gentler tone. "And so he did! Do you remember, Jenny, my telling you last autumn how nearly I was shot one day coming home through Farmer Dyson's field in the partridge season, and

how kind and sorry the—the person was about it? Well, that gentleman that we met to-day was the same man; and I have seen him once since then as well—only last week, when Lion and I were out riding. I had dismounted, while Lion went into a house, and had tied Princess to a tree; but she managed to loose herself and get away; and fortunately he—this gentleman was passing and caught her for me. I was very grateful to him for it, and I think," the soft eyes brightening, "that if he had been a fast man he might have dispensed with an introduction altogether. As it was, I was very pleased to meet him again, and be able to thank him; and I daresay you would have been the same in my place; for nothing could have been kinder or more courteous than he was; and he didn't even know who I was, and must have thought me very awkward and troublesome, and—and foolish altogether."

"Why, Sybil, of course I should," cried Jenny, all the more penitently because Sybil's voice had assumed an almost tearful intonation. "Only, how could I guess who he was! I remember that fright of yours quite well. It alarmed me even to hear of it; and we didn't tell mamma lest it should upset her. I suppose that was why you didn't mention having met him again last week. Do you think he recognised you then?"

"Oh! yes. Why I recognised him," said Sybil, adding simply: "It was easier for me, however, because he is so much better-looking than most men. His features are so regular, and the eyes—— Did you notice them, and the face altogether, Jenny? It is like a picture."

But Jenny had been scolded, and was in a wilful mood.

"What picture?" she asked. "No, no, Sybil; I will forgive him for shaking hands with you under the circumstances, but I can't admire his eyes. They were like the wolf's in little Red Riding Hood. Take care of yourself. He has begun by shooting at you. He may end by eating you up."

She turned in at their own gate as she spoke, laughing merrily still, but Sybil's smile in answer was rather forced, and she was glad that Jenny turned off into the yard to visit Rolf the watch-dog, and so left her free to go to her own room alone.

Sybil did not like mysteries and unconventionalities; and her last encounter with Gareth had left an uncomfortable feeling on her mind: a feeling which increased to actual embarrassment when, lifting her

eyes during the sermon, she suddenly saw him in a pew not far from her and gazing at her with fixed, appealing eyes, as if seeking the recognition which she felt her cheeks were giving in spite of herself. Mrs. Jacobson's friendly greeting and prompt introductions had set that all right; and Gareth seemed so delighted at it, spoke so gratefully of the happy "chance" which had brought him and his hostess to Chadleigh church that morning, and said so many more pretty things to her during the few minutes that they were together than she generally received in the course of a fortnight, that she could not help feeling pleased and fluttered too. It is all very well to be quite superior to admiration, and all very nice to be engaged to a man who goes in for sensible conversation instead of silly compliments; but at one-and-twenty compliments don't always seem silly, and sensible conversation sometimes wearies.

It was rather a way of Gareth's to talk to girls whom he admired as though they were children, and he a man of middle age and experience; and it is true that he was aged—in the latter. Sybil was not. Perhaps for that very reason she felt inclined to admire him more unreservedly than if he had been quite a young man. Indeed, she thought him much older than he was; the very way in which he alluded to Lionel as a young fellow of much promise seeming to stamp himself with the seal of seniority, and to take any sound of impertinence from a speech he made as he showed Sybil a few half-withered flowers in his button-hole.

"Do you know what hand dropped these? I have kept them, for I had a fancy that I should touch it with mine before they faded quite; but they have needed a great deal of cherishing to make my fancy come true."

And Lionel had knocked their fellows into the dirt and trampled on them! Sybil must have been more than strong-minded not to feel mortified and flattered at the same moment.

She said no more about it, however. Jenny's raillery, either because it vexed her, or because she was annoyed at being vexed by it, had that effect, it sealed her lips: a bad thing in a woman, say what you will to the contrary. Talk is a woman's safety-valve. It is not till she is deprived of that medium for mental evaporation that she becomes dangerous.

If, however, Jenny's little joke about Red Riding Hood's wolf prevented her sister from saying any more to her of its object, Sybil's strictures had the effect of

silencing the young girl on the score of Mr. Vane's hostess; and when later in the afternoon she overheard Sybil giving an account of the meeting with Mrs. Jacobson to her mother, and describing in her own pleasant way the former's friendliness and agreeability, Jenny glided out of the room lest her silence should appear like dissent, and a dissent all the more unamiable because she saw from Sybil's way of putting it that Mrs. Jacobson's warm admiration of Lionel formed the chief ground for her sister's appreciation of the lady.

Mrs. Dysart thought the same and laughed a little as she answered, stroking the fair head: "I'm afraid my daughter would find something charming in anyone who admired her lover. Still, I own our Lion's sermons are a trifle better than those of young curates in general; and it shows a certain superiority in a woman of these parts" (there was always a modicum of fine scorn in Mrs. Dysart's allusions to the neighbourhood where she had elected to dwell) "to be able to appreciate the difference. The boy will be flattered if people from Mickleham come to hear him."

"And London people, too, mamma," said Sybil a little eagerly. "For the gentleman with Mrs. Jacobson, a Mr. Vane, had only run down from town for a few days; and he said he would rather hear Lionel than a good many fashionable London preachers. He was a literary man himself, he told me so, and that he knew most of the men of the day; so he ought to be a judge. I—I should have liked you to have seen him, mamma."

"Ah, I have drifted out of the world of literary people since I came down here," sighed Mrs. Dysart, "but it was for you girls, and it has been all for the best. I would rather see people through your eyes now. If Mrs. Jacobson calls, as you say she wants to do, I will submit to it for Lionel's sake; but for my own I know quite enough people."

She did not say anything about submitting to see Mrs. Jacobson's friend; and the idea would not even have occurred to Sybil herself. She had done her duty in mentioning him, and in doing so had persuaded herself as well as her mother that any interest she might feel in him was on Lionel's account. Dear Lionel! It was pleasant to hear him praised by strangers.

Lionel himself was ungrateful, however.

"Mrs. Jacobson!" he exclaimed in anything but complimentary tones, when coming to call a day or two later he found Jenny

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in the garden by herself, and heard that his lady-love was out, having been carried off for a drive by the lady in question. "What on earth brought her here?"

"She called," said Jenny rather shortly; then seeing further enquiries in Lion's uplifted eyebrows: "Mamma had a headache and was lying down—she is now—so Sybil went down; and as it was such a lovely day Mrs. Jacobson persuaded her to go for a drive. Mamma said she might. She will be sorry, though, if she finds you came when she was out."

"I am sorry she went," said Lion. "Sybil is too good to be driving about with that vulgar little woman. What made her call here at all?"

"Why—didn't Syb tell you?—she was at church last Sunday. I think she said she came over to hear you preach, and admired your sermon immensely. She walked as far as the turning with us afterwards, and praised your eloquence to the skies."

"Flummery!" said Lion. "I don't believe she ever listened to a sermon in her life or could tell you what it was about. Just like her; all flummery together!"

"Who is uncharitable now!" cried Jenny, looking up from the geranium she was planting to shake her trowel laughingly at her future brother. "If Sybil were here, wouldn't you get a lecture! I did the other day for finding fault with this Mrs. Jacobson; she fancied that you liked her, Lion."

"I? What put that idea into her head?"

"Because you took her to call there once. She told me so; and she likes her."

"Then I'm very sorry for it. I took her? Oh, yes; I remember now. There was a thunderstorm coming on, and Mrs. Jacobson met us just at her own gate as we rode by and insisted on our coming in for shelter. I didn't like to refuse, because Sybil had a cold and the other woman made such a fuss it would have seemed churlish; but I never thought she would have built up a visiting acquaintance on it."

"I am comforted," said Jenny demurely. "I was beginning to think I was very wicked in not falling in love with that Mrs. Jacobson, Sybil seemed so shocked at my want of charity."

"Ah, that was because she is always so tenderly charitable herself," said Lion fondly, his ill-humour passing away at the thought of his lady-love's good qualities. "You know how she hates to be discourteous or to hurt anyone's feelings. Sometimes I doubt whether she remembers that she has any wishes of her own, she is

so ready to fall in with other people's. I dare say she won't even own to having been bored when she comes back? There, Jenny, leave those geraniums and come indoors, I've something to show you. A friend has sent me a parcel from New Zealand of the most lovely ferns; and I brought them round with me. They'll make your mouth water."

Sybil in the meantime was on her homeward way, bowling smoothly along a broad sunny road in Mrs. Jacobson's stylish barouche, with that lady at her side, and Gareth's blue eyes looking into hers from the opposite seat. They had picked him up on the way, as he was "taking a walk," and he had gathered a little bunch of wild flowers, wood anemones and violets like those Sybil had dropped the other day, which he gave her with a smile that supplied the need of any words. Perhaps he had never in all his idle life tried so hard to make himself agreeable to anyone as to this shy, sweet, maidenly girl, who was not like any other he was in the habit of meeting. She was so utterly destitute of coquetry, so innocently sweet and gracious, so trustful in others, and withal so exquisitely modest and dignified, that she fascinated him like some rare flower, or delicate perfume. Even Mrs. Jacobson felt the charm as honestly, and tried to imitate the air and manner which contained it; and Gareth saw the effort, and laughed savagely within him at the absurdity of it. To him it was like an ape mimicking a dove; but he was ungrateful to make such a comparison, for poor Mrs. Jacobson was going out of her way for his pleasure, and she was not so bad after all. Of course, she was vain, and vulgar, and loud, but there was no harm in her. She was quite as fond of her husband as Mrs. Dysart could have been of hers; and if she "went on" with Gareth Vane in a way which Jenny would have stigmatised as flirting, she cared no more in reality for that dangerous Apollo than for any other good-looking young man with sufficient spare time to enliven Birchwood now and then with a visit, and help her in keeping Matt at home of an evening. That Matt was a terribly black sheep; and perhaps his wife wouldn't have used so much rouge now if she hadn't cried away a good deal of her natural bloom during the first year or two of her married life.

At present she was in high good-humour, first at giving the neighbourhood an opportunity of seeing one of the exclusive Miss



Dysarts in her carriage, and secondly at having secured an attraction to detain Gareth longer at Birchwood; and she therefore laid herself out to second his efforts at being agreeable with such success, that when Sybil alighted at her own door, it was with the bright expression of one who had thoroughly enjoyed herself, and a sincere hope that mamma would let her accept an invitation to lunch at Birchwood, which had been given her for the following week.

"My last day in the country! Do come, please," Gareth said entreatingly; and Sybil thought she would certainly like to do so.

She came in radiant and glowing as the afternoon sunshine itself to the school-room where the other two were still bending over the oak table, a pile of dead ferns before them, one or two similar heaps—Jenny's old collections—littered about, and half-a-dozen open books scattered over floor and table. Jenny was just arguing something in her clear eager treble, and Lion disputing with her so warmly, that they did not hear the door open. Sybil held up both her pretty grey-gloved hands.

"Oh, what a mess!" she cried, with half real, half laughing horror. "Lion, you are too bad. Untidy yourself, and making Jenny worse. How am I to shake hands across all this litter!"

"Try," said Lion, stretching across it to prison one hand in his big hold. "Never you mind her, Jenny. She scolds us because she has been bored herself. Well, you poor victim to politeness, how have you survived it? I was very angry to find you had gone."

"Angry! Why?" asked Sybil innocently. "Indeed, it was very pleasant; and oh, Jenny, what do you think?"

But Jenny interrupted her.

"There, Lion, I told you so! Sybil never will own that being amiable to uncongenial people is unpleasant. I believe she makes a principle of it. Sybil, come and look at these lovely foreign ferns. Now, isn't this an Asplenium? Lion declares it's a Gymnogramma, but I am sure it's as like our Asplenium Ruta-Muraria as it can be. Look."

"Very like," said Sybil, glancing at the fern without much attention. Dead plants were by no means as interesting to her as green and growing ones. "But, Jenny, did

you hear what I was saying. Mr. Vane has been in Austria. He was there two years ago, and stayed several days in our town; he——"

"Mr. Vane? Oh! the man with the Red Riding Hood wolf's eyes," said Jenny. "Was he with you, then. Does he live with the Jacobsons?"

"Surely Mrs. Jacobson hadn't the coolness to bring her men-friends here?" cried Lion. "What impertinence! It was well for her your mother wasn't down. Don't, for goodness sake get intimate with that woman, Sybil. Jacobson is thoroughly bad, fast and hard-living, and his friends are the same. Now, Jenny, you are putting the wrong ones together. That's no more an Asplenium than I am. Look at the arrangement of the spores, and——"

Sybil went quietly away to take off her bonnet. She was not cross with either Lion or her sister, for their strictures on her new friends or their absorption in the occupation they had in hand; but she was disappointed. The drive had been so pleasant. Such pretty things had been said, both of her sister and her lover. Mr. Vane had even compared the latter's style to that of Kingsley, and expressed a wish to know him; and it had been so delightful to hear that old town on the Adriatic, where her earliest years were passed, spoken of with the interest of intimacy. She wanted to share her pleasure with Lion and Jenny, to tell them all about it; and her confidences had been rebuffed, and her friends sneered at!

When Jenny came running upstairs a little later, to say tea was ready, and mamma and Lion calling out for their sunbeam to sweeten it, she went down at once and showed herself as bright and serene as a sunbeam should; but she said no more of her late companions, and Jenny did not even know whence came the little bunch of wild flowers which she found in a glass of water on the table by her sister's bed.

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